



## Review article on Takradhara Panchkarma therapy

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### ABSTRACT

Panchakarma encompasses five specialized bio-purification therapies designed to detoxify the body and mind. It is applicable to both healthy and diseased individuals, serving a preventive role in the former while facilitating detoxification and homeostatic restoration in the latter.

Takradhara, a well-documented Panchakarma intervention, involves the controlled and continuous administration of medicated buttermilk over the forehead. This therapy has demonstrated therapeutic efficacy in the management of chronic conditions such as psychosomatic disorders, psoriasis, hypertension, and insomnia.

Empirical evidence supports the clinical utility of Takradhara. This study examines its classifications, standardized procedural methodologies, potential adverse effects with their management, and its hypothesized mechanisms of action in dermatological, neurological, and psychosomatic disorders. Additionally, its influence on neuroendocrine regulation and emotional homeostasis is discussed.

**Keywords:** *Takradhara*, Psoriasis, Hypertension, Psychosomatic Disorders, Panchakarma

### Introduction

The increasing global preference for natural therapies has underscored the significance of Panchakarma, a sophisticated Ayurvedic detoxification system designed to purify both the body and mind. Its widespread application in preventive, curative, and promotive healthcare highlights its clinical efficacy in managing a broad spectrum of diseases.

Modern lifestyles, characterized by high stress, unhealthy social dynamics, and demanding work environments, have led to a surge in mental health disorders and psychosomatic conditions. Ayurveda, recognizing these centuries ago, describes specialized therapies aimed at restoring mental and emotional balance. These traditional interventions remain highly relevant, offering holistic solutions where conventional treatments often fall short.

*Takradhara*, a unique Panchakarma therapy, employs medicated buttermilk infused with therapeutic herbs, administered in a continuous stream over the forehead in a controlled manner<sup>i</sup>. This therapy exerts a profound calming effect on the nervous system, making it particularly effective in addressing psychosomatic disorders, psoriasis, hypertension, and insomnia. Its ability to regulate neuroendocrine function and promote emotional stability positions it as a valuable therapeutic approach in contemporary integrative medicine.

### Different Types of Takradhara:

1. **Ekanga Takra Dhara** – When *Dhara* is performed on a specific body part, such as a limb affected by psoriasis.
2. **Sarvanga Takra Dhara (Kaya Takradhara)** – When *Dhara* is administered over the entire body, beneficial in stress and fatigue.
3. **Shiro Takra Dhara** – When *Dhara* is applied to the head, effective in hypertension, headache, and migraine.

**Indications** – It is primarily indicated in psychosomatic disorders, insomnia, tension headaches, and premature greying of hair. It is not advisable in *Amanubandha* conditions.

**Takra Dhara is highly effective in the treatment of the following disorders<sup>ii</sup> –**

- **Suklakeha** – Premature greying of hair
- **Klama** – Fatigue
- **Doshkopa** – Aggravation of *Doshas*
- **Shiroruja** – Headache

- *Ojakshaya* – Decreased immunity
- *Karacharana Parisphotan* – Fissures and cracks in the soles and palms
- *Mutradosha* – Urinary disorders
- *Sandhi Shaitilya* – Joint laxity
- *Hridroga* – Cardiac disorders
- *Agnimandhya* – Hypometabolism
- *Aruchi* – Loss of appetite
- *Karna Roga* – Ear disorders
- *Netra Roga* – Eye disorders

#### Materials required for *Takradhara* preparation-

**Table 1: Contents of Takradhara**

Sr. No.	Contents	Quantity
1	<i>Amalaki Churna</i>	200 gms
2	Milk	1.5 liters
3	<i>Musta Churna</i>	100 gms
4	Oil (for Talam)	10 ml
5	<i>Rasna Churna</i>	5 gms

#### Dose and Method of Administration

Preparation of the Medicine:

##### a) *Takra* Preparation:

As per Table 1, 1.5 liters of milk is diluted with four times the amount of water and boiled with 100 gm of crushed *Musta* until it is reduced to one-fourth of its original volume. The *Musta* is then filtered out once the milk has cooled. This prepared milk is allowed to ferment overnight to form curd. The next morning, the curd is churned with *Amalaki Kwatha* to prepare the *Takra* for Dhara.

##### b) *Amalaki Kwatha* Preparation:

Dried *Amalaki* fruit is boiled with 16 times the amount of water and reduced to 1/8th of its original volume. A portion of this decoction is used to rinse the head after the procedure. The *Amalaki* (Indian Gooseberry, *Emblica officinalis*) should be air- and sun-dried for at least one year before use. The fruit should be processed into a coarse powder, ensuring it is free from contaminants, with seeds removed before preparation<sup>iii</sup>.

The milk used for *Takra* preparation can be medicated with *Argwadhadi Churna*, *Useera*, *Hreebera*, *Chandana*, *Vashti*, and *Panchagandha Churna* depending on the specific disease condition.

#### Pre-Operative Measures

Before starting the procedure, *Bala* Oil, *Ksheer Bala* Oil, or a disease-specific medicated oil should be applied to the head. The patient's eyes must be covered with cotton gauze, and the ears should be plugged with cotton to prevent any discomfort. It is essential to educate the patient and their relatives about the procedure, including its benefits, potential limitations, and post-treatment care.

#### Dietary Guidelines

During the course of treatment, the patient should adhere to a *Pathya Ahara*, which includes easily digestible food. Exposure to wind, dust, sunlight, and rain should be strictly avoided. A prescribed diet plan and lifestyle modifications must be followed diligently during and after the therapy to enhance its effectiveness.

#### Season/Time

*Takradhara* is ideally performed in the morning hours between 7:00 AM and 10:00 AM. If necessary, it can also be conducted in the evening between 4:00 PM and 6:00 PM. The procedure is contraindicated during *Shishira* (late winter) and *Hemanta* (early winter) seasons due to their potential to interfere with the therapeutic outcomes.

#### Duration

The treatment is generally conducted over a period of 7 to 14 days. Each session lasts for approximately 60 to 120 minutes, depending on the patient's condition and response to therapy<sup>iv</sup>.

## Procedure

The patient should lie down in a supine position on the *Droni* (treatment table), with a small pillow placed under the neck for support. A *Dhara* vessel is suspended above the forehead to ensure a continuous and uniform stream of medicated buttermilk flows over the forehead. The *Dharavarri* tip should be positioned at a height of 6 to 7 cm (four *Angula*) above the forehead, and its total length should measure between 18 to 21 cm<sup>v</sup>. The buttermilk is collected and poured back into the vessel, allowing for a continuous and uninterrupted flow. The attendant gently oscillates the vessel to ensure the entire forehead is covered with the medicated liquid. Simultaneously, a mild head massage is performed to enhance therapeutic effects.

To maintain efficacy, *Takra* should not be heated or reused. Unlike *Shirodhara*, the buttermilk must always be freshly prepared and discarded after a single use. Pouring the liquid from a height lower than the recommended 6–7 cm can aggravate the disease, so care must be taken to maintain the prescribed distance<sup>vi</sup>.

## Post-Procedure Management (Paschat Karma)

Once the therapy is completed, the head is rinsed with *Amalaki Kwatha*, and the body is gently swabbed with warm sponging. The wet head is then dried with a towel, followed by the application of *Rasnadi Choorna* on the crown (*Talam Dharana*) to counteract the cold induced by the therapy. After the procedure, the patient must rest for the same duration as the therapy session before taking a warm water bath. Bathing should ideally take place two hours after treatment, and the water can be medicated with *Dashamoola*, *Nirgundi*, or *Nimba* to enhance the therapeutic effects.

## Dietary & Lifestyle Guidelines After Treatment

During and after the therapy, the patient should consume light and easily digestible food. Overeating and consumption of fried, refrigerated, or heavy foods must be avoided. Food should be freshly prepared, warm, and easy to digest. Hot water is recommended for both drinking and bathing purposes<sup>vii</sup>. The patient must refrain from engaging in activities that induce physical or mental strain, such as excessive exercise, prolonged walking, sexual activity, smoking, alcohol consumption, and suppression of natural urges (*Vegavarodha*). Excessive exposure to sunlight and dust should also be avoided. Adequate sleep is crucial, and the patient should neither stay awake for long hours nor oversleep. The position of the head while sleeping should be well-adjusted, avoiding an excessively high or low pillow placement. Loud speaking or excessive talking should be restricted. Emotional stability plays a vital role in the healing process, so the patient must avoid stress, grief, anger, and exhaustion. If possible, a break from work is recommended during the treatment period to allow complete physical and mental relaxation.

## Complications & Management

In some cases, if the buttermilk is poured from a height greater than the prescribed 6–7 cm, the patient may experience excessive cold, leading to shivering. In such instances, the therapy should be stopped immediately, and the patient should be managed with *Ushnopachara* (heat therapy), which includes providing a hot water bath, warm liquid intake, or keeping the patient in a warm room for a few hours to restore body temperature.

## Probable Mode of Action of *Takra Dhara*

### A) In Psychosomatic Disorders

When *Takra* is continuously streamed over the forehead, it interacts with deeper brain structures by stimulating vital energy points known as *Marma*. These *Marma*, which act as junctions for bones, muscles, blood vessels, and nerves, play a key role in the body's vital energy. By activating these points, *Takradhara* enhances immune function and promotes better blood circulation, particularly in the brain. Specific head *Marmas*—*Apanga*, *Avarta*, *Shanka*, *Utkshapa*, *Seemantha*, and *Sthapani*—are directly stimulated during the procedure, leading to improved cerebral blood flow and enhanced cognitive abilities.

Enhanced circulation to the hypothalamus also aids in regulating the Autonomic Nervous System, which often becomes dysregulated due to stress. Since stress triggers hypothalamic activity, resulting in various physiological imbalances, *Takradhara* helps stabilize these functions, leading to symptomatic relief in psychosomatic conditions.

### B) In Hypertension

*Takradhara*, a distinctive Panchakarma therapy, involves the external application of medicated buttermilk in a continuous stream over the forehead. This steady flow helps pacify aggravated *Vata* and *Pitta doshas*, which contribute to circulatory disturbances. Since *Pitta* is closely associated with blood (*Rakta Dhātu*), any imbalance in *Pitta* directly affects blood circulation, leading to conditions like hypertension. *Takradhara*'s cooling properties counteract the excessive heat and intensity of *Pitta* and *Rakta*, thereby helping regulate blood pressure.

## Effect on *Chakras*

The therapy also influences the body's energy centers (*Chakras*), particularly those governing mental equilibrium and emotional stability. It stimulates regions of the brain, including the pituitary gland, pineal body, and subcortical structures of the midbrain, which control emotions such as anger, grief, pain, fear, and memory. By modulating these areas, *Takradhara* helps restore mental balance and mitigates stress-induced hypertension.

### Effect on the Endocrine System

Since the hypothalamus governs endocrine regulation, Takradhara may influence hormone secretion by acting on this structure. The hypothalamic neurons responsible for releasing hormones are regulated by neurotransmitters such as dopamine, noradrenaline, and serotonin, which originate from the midbrain. These neurotransmitter-producing centers are, in turn, controlled by the limbic system, which reacts to emotional and psychological stress.

### Regulation of Emotional and Behavioral Patterns

The limbic system and hypothalamus oversee various emotional responses, including rage, pain, aggression, pleasure, and overall behavior. *Takradhara* is believed to influence these functions, leading to the reduction of psychosomatic conditions such as psoriasis. Emotional imbalances, including anxiety and depression, are often linked to disturbances in *Seemantha Marma*, located at the cranial sutures. By stimulating this *Marma*, *Takradhara* may alleviate psychological distress and stress-induced hypertension.

Additionally, the calming effect of the therapy supports heart function and circulation, which helps prevent hypertension-related complications.

### C) In Psoriasis

Takra is composed of five Rasas, excluding *Lavana*. It has *Ushna Virya* (heating potency), *Amla Vipaka* (sour metabolic effect), and properties that pacify *Vata* and *Kapha doshas*. Buttermilk is rich in lactic acid, a well-documented agent for hydrating and reducing skin thickening, which is commonly seen in psoriasis. Lactic acid also enhances the transdermal absorption of medicinal substances, allowing the therapeutic ingredients of Takra to penetrate the skin effectively.

Takradhara incorporates medicinal herbs such as *Amalaki*, known for its potent anti-inflammatory and antioxidant properties<sup>viii</sup>. Similarly, *Musta* also exhibits strong anti-inflammatory and antioxidant effects<sup>ix</sup>, making it beneficial in the treatment of psoriasis. The lactic acid content in *Takra* further aids in the absorption of these medicinal compounds, helping to reduce systemic inflammation and oxidative stress.

Psoriasis is characterized by an abnormal increase in cell proliferation, leading to excessive scaling. *Amalaki*, which contains high levels of ascorbic acid, has demonstrated antioxidant and immune-modulating effects. Research on *Amalaki* extracts has shown that it can inhibit excessive cell growth, promote cell apoptosis (programmed cell death)<sup>x</sup>, and enhance reactive oxygen species production, making it highly effective in psoriasis management.

## Discussion

Takradhara, an integral part of Panchakarma therapy, exhibits significant therapeutic benefits in managing psychosomatic disorders, hypertension, and psoriasis. The continuous pouring of medicated buttermilk over the forehead stimulates *Marmas*, enhancing cerebral circulation and influencing the autonomic nervous system. This contributes to a calming effect, reducing stress-related disorders.

In hypertension, Takradhara pacifies aggravated *Vata* and *Pitta doshas*, which are linked to vascular disturbances. The cooling effect of buttermilk counteracts excess heat and supports hemodynamic stability. Additionally, its influence on the hypothalamus and endocrine system aids in regulating hormone secretion, particularly stress-related neurotransmitters such as dopamine and serotonin. This contributes to improved emotional and behavioral responses.

Regarding psoriasis, *Takradhara's* active components, including lactic acid and antioxidants from *Amalaki* and *Musta*, facilitate transdermal absorption, reducing inflammation and oxidative stress. The antioxidant properties of *Amalaki* play a role in modulating immune responses, while *Musta* enhances anti-inflammatory effects, potentially normalizing aberrant skin cell proliferation.

Clinically, *Takradhara* demonstrates efficacy in alleviating symptoms of psychosomatic disorders, reducing blood pressure fluctuations, and mitigating psoriasis-related skin conditions. Regular assessment of vital parameters and laboratory investigations further validate its therapeutic impact. As a non-invasive, holistic approach, *Takradhara* underscores Ayurveda's emphasis on restoring systemic equilibrium through natural interventions.

## Conclusion

*Takradhara* serves as an effective Ayurvedic therapy for psychosomatic disorders, hypertension, and psoriasis by modulating neural, endocrine, and immune functions. Its calming effect on the nervous system, regulation of *doshas*, and antioxidant-rich composition contribute to its therapeutic efficacy. With its non-invasive nature and systemic benefits, *Takradhara* exemplifies Ayurveda's holistic approach to restoring physiological balance.

## References

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